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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: IRAQIS DEEM THE AMBASSADOR'S TESTIMONY REALISTIC

Classified By: Political Counselor Matt Tueller for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

11. (C) Assessing Iraqi reaction to the Congressional testimony by the Ambassador and General Petraeus has been complicated somewhat by the GOI's April 9 closure and a Baghdad-wide curfew, but initial soundings here and in Iraq's provinces have been largely positive. The most common reaction thus far is that the testimony has been realistic. Two sources in the Prime Minister's office, speaking independently, told us they were struck by the reasoned, realistic tone and content. One said: "When the Ambassador described the recent progress as fragile, I understood exactly what he meant." Our Shia bloc contacts agreed that the first day's testimony accurately conveyed the reality of current conditions in Iraq. Vice President Adel Abdel Mehdi advisor Laith Shubbar commented on the realistic quality of the presentation, noting that neither the testimony nor the reaction of Senators produced major surprises. He said he and other VP advisors would meet today with Adel to discuss the testimony and its implications for Iraq. Shia Independent CoR member Qassim Daood also spoke in positive terms about the testimony. He attached great importance to concerns voiced by the Ambassador and General Petraeus regarding Iranian interference in Iraq, adding that he would raise similar concerns when he meets Iranian government officials next week in Tehran. Dawa Tanzim CoR member Abdulhadi al-Hassani remarked on what he perceived as "overly emotional and often misinformed" remarks of Senators, noting that the responses to their questions accurately depicted the facts on the ground in Iraq. In particular, he asserted that the Ambassador was effective in spelling out the dangers and consequences of an abrupt and premature U.S. departure that, according to Abdulhadi, would "throw away all the sacrifices and losses we have both suffered." Haitham al-Husseini, top aide to Abdel Aziz al-Hakim of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), complimented the realistic picture of Iraq as portrayed in the testimony.

Provincial Reactions

12. (C) The Governor of Najaf told the PRT there that he was pleased with the testimony -- especially by the references to Najaf that he heard. REO Basrah reports that Basrawis were pleased to hear public condemnation of Iran for its interference in Iraq. PRT Hillah met with a reporter from Radio Babil, who characterized the testimony as fair and objective. A correspondent for Al-Wasit, the Provincial Council's newspaper, was somewhat less informed. "There was testimony yesterday?" he asked. At least two contacts expressed confusion over the meaning of the 45-day pause. Post will report further reactions septel.
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